

**Juggling the Bear: Assessing
NATO Enlargement in Light of
Europe's Past and Asia's Future**

David S. Fadok

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Comments pertaining to this paper are invited; please forward to:

Director, USAF Institute for National Security Studies
HQ USAFA/DFES
2354 Fairchild Drive, Suite 5L27
USAF Academy, CO 80840
phone: 719-333-2717
fax: 719-333-2716
email: inss@usafa.af.mil

Visit the Institute for National Security Studies home page at
<http://www.usafa.af.mil/inss>

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FOREWORD

We are pleased to publish this twenty-fourth volume in the *Occasional Paper* series of the US Air Force Institute for National Security Studies (INSS). As we approach NATO's fiftieth anniversary and a crucial NATO summit, INSS offers two studies that address the state of the alliance and critical issues that it must face if it is to survive its Cold-War roots. In the previous study, Joseph R. Wood's *Occasional Paper 23, NATO: Potential Sources of Tension*, the focus was on the range of issues, large and small, that comprise the NATO agenda in this golden anniversary year. That paper did an excellent job of presenting both the issues and the political-economic-military context in which they must be addressed. In this, the follow-on study, David S. Fadok's *Occasional Paper 24, Juggling the Bear: Assessing NATO Enlargement in Light of Europe's Past and Asia's Future*, one of the most thorny of those issues--NATO expansion to include Russia--is examined in exhaustive detail. After examining Russian accession into NATO from both internal and external perspectives, Fadok concludes that "Bold vision demands bold action," and calls for United States advocacy to include Russia within the alliance. Together these two studies, written by two extremely talented and rising minds within the USAF today, present a fitting intellectual tribute to perhaps history's most successful alliance as they develop the issues upon which hinge its future prospects for success.

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JAMES M. SMITH
Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Most, if not all, contemporary debate on the policy of enlarging the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) focuses on its expansion into the Central and Eastern European security vacuum caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the attendant disintegration of the Warsaw Pact. Cost, benefit, and risk analyses for various policy options are currently bounded by considerations of European security in general and by concerns about US-Russian relations in particular.

Though limited, there has been some discussion within both US and European circles about bringing Russia into the NATO fold. However, this proposition has been dismissed by most as a political non-starter due primarily to its economic and/or strategic costs. Some assessments conclude the price tag for Russian membership in NATO is well above what either the US, its European allies, or Russia itself would be willing or able to pay. Other assessments conclude that Russia's inclusion would entail heavy strategic costs by either paralyzing NATO's political and military responsiveness or by transforming NATO into a scaled-down, redundant, and, therefore, unnecessary replica of the United Nations.

This paper reopens the debate on Russian entry into NATO by arguing that the United States should begin advocating NATO membership for the Russian Federation as a means

- to counter internal threats to Russian democratization
- to construct an effective security architecture for post-Cold War Europe, and
- to address emerging challenges to Asia-Pacific security, notably, China's rise as a regional "peer competitor" and its burgeoning relationship with Russia.

Such advocacy would mark a clear departure from the current practice of not “naming names” of potential members, but would not entail an unconditional promise of accession. Rather, it would establish a clear link between the offer of membership and Russia’s continued development in accordance with NATO’s fundamental principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law.

To answer the central research question satisfactorily, I first consider US support for Russian NATO membership as a possible means to combat the three main internal threats to Russian democratization: 1) a steady expansion of organized crime; 2) a popular nationalist-authoritarian political elite; and 3) an increasingly discontented military. While these challenges are formidable, they are by no means insurmountable. But to keep them manageable, both national and international attention and action are needed within the next five to ten years, before either the criminal tentacles attain a permanent stranglehold on the Russian state or a reactionary authoritarian phoenix rises from the ashes to restore order to the ensuing chaos.

NATO membership is one possible means for Moscow to address these internal threats. History demonstrates that participation in this politico-military alliance has provided an “air of security” in which fledgling democracies have taken flight. For a struggling Russian democracy, the very *advocacy* of membership by the US, whether or not it leads to eventual accession, could provide a comparable “air of security” in two respects. First, it would diffuse the perceived threat of American expansionism embodied in current enlargement plans and, second, it would underscore Western confidence in and desire for full Russian participation in a peaceful, undivided and democratic Europe. Within this “air of security,” the reformist factions in government may be better able to consolidate their political power and thereby crystallize the economic, legislative, judicial, and defense reforms needed to arrest the

cancerous spread of organized crime, ultranationalist rhetoric, and military disgruntlement.

I then extend my analysis beyond Russia's borders and assess American advocacy of Russian entry into NATO in light of published US National Security Strategy for Europe and Eurasia. I break down America's overarching gameplan into its component parts of ends, ways, and means, and thereby demonstrate that US support for Russian accession is in full keeping with the avowed strategy. Furthermore, I contend that current accommodations with Russia, as codified in the NATO-Russia Founding Act of May 1997, have a greater likelihood of redividing Europe into distinct spheres of influence than outright Russian membership in the organization. If the US truly intends to go beyond the "old thinking" of balance-of-power politics and beyond the Cold War barriers it entrenched, then it needs to eschew formalized concerts with "the other Great Power" (such as the Founding Act) and, instead, lead Europe in the construction of a genuine pan-continental security structure that includes Russia as a full member. For both historic and practical reasons, NATO is the most promising of all current institutional candidates as the foundation upon which to build an effective security architecture for twenty-first century Europe.

Finally, I assess the potential impact of advocating Russian NATO membership on US security concerns outside the European continent, or more specifically, on American interests within the Asia-Pacific theater. In many respects, Russian inclusion in the North Atlantic alliance could be considered strategically advantageous for America with regard to developments in East Asia. Among other benefits, it could effectively preempt the establishment of formal politico-military ties between a weakened Russian Federation and a modernizing People's Republic of China (PRC), a bloc of developing countries increasingly disenchanted with the US strategy of democratic

internationalism and, thus, very likely to challenge American interests on a regional or global scale.

However, if a policy of US advocacy of Russian NATO accession is attempted without proper forethought and planning, it could backfire on the US by undermining its policy of engagement with both China and the area's other predominant player, Japan—two nations with historic and ongoing disputes with Russia. Consequently, a set of carefully constructed and skillfully presented security arrangements among and between the four powers, to perhaps include nonaggression guarantees, territorial concessions, and extensive confidence building measures, may need to be formalized in concert with Russian accession in order to allay Oriental concerns, old and new.

Bold vision demands bold action. The vision is one expressed unequivocally in US National Security Strategy: “At this moment in history, the United States is called upon to lead—to organize the forces of freedom and progress . . . and to advance our prosperity, reinforce our democratic ideals and values, and enhance our security.” The action is one needed sooner rather than later: open US advocacy of Russian entry into NATO.